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Agenda item 34
Prevention of armed conflict

Letter dated 9 May 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to convey herewith the summary report of the Istanbul Conference on Mediation, held in Istanbul on 24 and 25 February 2012 (see annex).

I would be grateful if the present letter and the annex thereto could be circulated as a document of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, "Prevention of armed conflict", as a contribution to the informal high-level meeting of the Assembly on "The role of Member States in Mediation", to be held on 23 May 2012.

(*Signed*) Ertuğrul **Apakan**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 9 May 2012 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Summary report on the Istanbul Conference on Mediation

24 and 25 February 2012, Istanbul

The Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs organized the first Istanbul Conference on Mediation on 24 and 25 February 2012, with the theme "Enhancing peace through mediation: new actors, fresh approaches, bold initiatives". The Conference was held under the auspices of H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey.

The Conference was designed to bring together international, governmental and civil society actors engaged in conflict prevention and mediation activities to discuss how to enhance interaction, understanding and cooperation among themselves with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the international community's mediation efforts.

Representatives from the United Nations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, academia and the members of the Group of Friends of Mediation, formed within the framework of the Mediation for Peace initiative, attended the Conference.

The programme of the Conference is attached to the present report. As can be seen, five main sessions were held, on "Increasing relevance of non-governmental actors in conflict resolution", "The evolving role of the United Nations in mediation", "Addressing the coordination and capacity-building challenges", "Alternative approaches to mediation" and "Ideas for the future".

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Finland and Brazil, as well as the President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, addressed the Conference at its high-level session. The Permanent Representatives of Turkey and Finland to the United Nations also briefed the participants on the activities of the Group of Friends of Mediation.

The main points raised and discussed at the Conference are set out below.

1. Increasing relevance of non-governmental actors in conflict resolution

Modern diplomacy is no longer confined to traditional diplomacy actors, as contemporary conflicts are more complex and complicated in nature. Thus, the multilayered nature of conflicts requires multifaceted, and at times unconventional, approaches to conflict prevention/resolution.

This in turn provides increased opportunities for non-State actors in conflict resolution. This is why today non-governmental actors are increasingly present at every stage of conflicts, be it prevention, mediation or post-conflict rehabilitation. In principle, the involvement of non-governmental actors in mediation efforts is a welcome development, as it increases the overall mediation capacity of the international community and provides fresh impetus and energy to the field of mediation.

Non-governmental organizations bring added value to preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts mainly because of the informal nature of their engagement. They can deal with parties to the conflict more easily than States or international/regional organizations. Therefore, they can also create a forum for informal talks among the conflicting parties even when the time is not ripe for formal negotiations, thus preparing the ground for full-fledged peace processes.

In addition, they are more agile in responding quickly to crises, as they have fewer bureaucratic constraints. They also have comparative advantages in terms of maintaining confidentiality, thinking creative ideas outside the box and maintaining an impartial approach, thanks to the lack of a strong political motivation. They are also better at employing local experts who help them to better understand the root causes of conflicts.

However, non-governmental organizations have the disadvantage of not having enough "leverage" to be used in peace processes. They can also face questions as to whether they have the legitimacy and effectiveness required to sustain a mediation process in volatile and sensitive conflict situations. Moreover, project- or country-specific funding limits the flexibility of the work of non-governmental organizations.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, it is apparent that the contributions of non-governmental organizations have become increasingly important in mediation processes, but that their comparative advantages and disadvantages should always be kept in mind when employing their capabilities. Therefore, for effective mediation, ensuring complementarity and coherence between track I and track II actors is essential.

2. Evolving role of the United Nations in mediation

The United Nations is the central body for the maintenance of international peace and security. This is particularly so with respect to preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts, since the fundamental task of the United Nations is to create the necessary conditions for peace to prevail by eliminating the sources of conflict in a timely manner. However, the United Nations has not always been very effective in preventing and/or mediating conflicts. In retrospect, one can find both highly successful examples of conflict resolution/prevention and failed attempts.

As to the reasons for this mixed record or the gap between norms and practice, the very nature of the United Nations comes first to mind. The set-up of the Security Council, for instance, and its inability to effectively represent the global community hampers the efforts of the United Nations to deal in a timely manner with brewing or actual conflicts. The power politics among major players is yet another factor weakening the Organization's response.

Moreover, there is not sufficient and effective coordination within the United Nations among its various organs and agencies. Divergent positions taken by various United Nations bodies vis-à-vis conflict prevention and mediation issues inevitably limit the effectiveness of the United Nations in this field.

That said, the mediation capacity of the United Nations has increasingly been streamlined and enhanced over the past few years. The establishment of the Mediation Support Unit, the Mediation Support Standby Team and the Mediation Roster, as well as the setting-up of programmes to train the next generation of mediators and the provision of assistance to regional organizations and States in

building their own mediation capacities, have been significant steps in the right direction.

However, there is still considerable room for improvement. To this end, the United Nations should make the best use of its comparative advantages, such as its ability to set norms. In this regard, the recent General Assembly resolution 65/283, on mediation, and the preparation by the Secretary-General of guidance for effective mediation are welcome developments. The United Nations should indeed be able to guide mediation efforts in an increasingly crowded field through coordination and capacity-building, as appropriate.

Another challenge that the United Nations will have to address with regard to its role in mediation is the need to improve coordination within United Nations agencies as well as between the United Nations and regional organizations.

The United Nations will also have to think about how to strengthen the link between different elements of its peace toolbox, including a wide range from mediation to peacekeeping and peacebuilding, so that there can be coherence as to when, why and how each is employed.

The selection of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General is another challenge, as their failures have had consequences for both the United Nations and people living in conflict zones. Therefore, it is important that the Special Representatives have sufficient understanding of the sensitivities involved in mediation processes, as well as an accurate picture of the conflict in its entirety.

3. Addressing the coordination and capacity-building challenges

With the significant increase in the number of actors engaged in mediation, coordination has become ever more important in ensuring coherence and avoiding "forum-shopping". Indeed, it is more often than not that we see multiple actors involved in the same conflict situation trying to mediate it through their own means.

The fact that there are many mediators at the same time is not necessarily a bad thing. On the contrary, the greater the number of mediation actors, the wider the outreach to the conflicting and affected parties and the greater the motivation for the parties to the conflict to explore political options, as opposed to military ones. Multiparty mediation is also valuable in getting community and civil society behind a peace process and engaging disaffected and alienated groups. The challenge is to ensure that all of them complement one another while rowing in the same direction.

Naturally, it would be ideal to determine which actor has the comparative advantage in making a difference in a mediation process, to coalesce around it and to ensure full coordination with it. However, it is not realistic to expect such full coordination, not least because of the need to preserve the confidentiality of any mediation process. Therefore, a loose form of coordination among mediation actors whereby they acknowledge and respect one another's presence is a more plausible scenario.

That said, the role of the United Nations in facilitating coordination among various mediation actors should be further explored. It is probably not feasible to use the United Nations as a strict clearing house mechanism, but it might be possible to enable the United Nations to see the big picture at all times and make the necessary recommendations to steer the course of mediation processes in the right

direction. As there is uneven coverage of conflicts around the world, the United Nations, through its wider grasp of the available mediation capacities, might also be of use in channelling them to where they are needed most.

As to capacity-building, this is a requirement that has not yet been sufficiently addressed. The United Nations has certainly made considerable progress over the past few years in increasing its own mediation capacities. Some non-governmental organizations have also started conducting extensive training programmes and made increasing contributions to the studies on mediation. However, there is still more to be done to develop mediation capacities.

In this regard, given that regional and subregional organizations are playing greater roles in conflict management in their own neighbourhoods, it should be a particular priority to help enhance their mediation capacities, for they still lack sufficient assets to deal with serious conflicts in their areas of responsibility on their own.

In fact, there have always been local peacemakers conducting work in their own environments. However, in order to systemize and institutionalize these efforts, regional capacity-building is very much needed. Greater effort should thus be made to increase capabilities at the national and regional levels mainly by the United Nations, but also by the other relevant and well-equipped States and non-governmental actors.

To this end, the proposal by some Member States for the establishment of United Nations centres of mediation in various parts of the world, close to conflict situations, with a view to providing training and building capacity should be further explored.

4. Alternative approaches to mediation

In the light of the lessons learned from the decades-long experiences gained in mediation efforts, there is now a pressing need to employ alternative approaches to current mediation practices, mainly by making them more culturally sensitive to local contexts.

Stepping back from the currently dominant practices, one sees the need to apply different forms of mediation as necessitated by each specific circumstance. There are, of course, useful applications of Western liberal approaches to mediation. However, there are many different manifestations of value and individualism that go beyond the Western understanding of participation or deliberation.

In this respect, mediation has remained slow to engage with social and cultural differences. Nevertheless, there has been progress over the past two decades, and now there is widespread acknowledgement of the need to engage with local approaches to conflict and its management.

Dominant mediation practices tend to focus on the parties to conflicts — individuals, States and organizations — rather than on the relationships among those entities. However, a large number of cultures emphasize relationships. Prioritizing entities over relationships compromises understanding of cultures and accompanying conflict dynamics.

Therefore, there is a need to recognize cultural differences and include local approaches and people in mediation efforts. On the other hand, it might not be helpful to look for a distinctly African, Asian or Islamic approach to mediation. Instead, there is a need to recognize differences, respect them and engage in

dialogue about them in order to ensure better analysis of the situation and thus conduct more effective mediation.

Conflicts cannot be understood from only one angle. Thus, an interdisciplinary approach and interdisciplinary intervention teams are needed in mediation processes. For instance, mental health practitioners should be included in these processes to address the complex nature of issues that the people are facing, especially with regard to social trauma and values-based conflicts.

In addition, interveners should be explicit in their commitment with regard to the service of justice and peace. There is also a need to incorporate and address religion and its role in public life. Likewise, the mediators should make the best use of technology in reaching out to different/marginalized groups. Equally important is the development of local partnerships.

In this regard, the role of the "insider mediator" is also extremely important and should be given due consideration. Insider mediators are trusted and respected local actors who have a deep knowledge of the dynamics and contexts of the conflict, share normative and cultural closeness with the conflicting parties and demonstrate a nuanced sensitivity in their contributions to find solutions to conflicts that are owned and valued by the parties themselves.

In many cases, therefore, it would be better to have insider mediators as the main actors in mediation, since in certain regions there are reservations concerning "outsider mediators", who are perceived as contributors of peace packages that do not take local realities into account.

That said, insider mediators need the support of the international community in order to effectively bring their comparative advantages to bear, and thus the United Nations should pay more attention to their needs and roles.

5. Ideas for the future

In the post-cold-war era, threats to security are changing. Modern threats arise at multiple global, national and local levels. New and diverse types of violent political conflict are emerging. Intra-State conflicts and these new kinds of violence have common sources such as underdevelopment, unemployment, corruption, competition for resources, arms proliferation and lack of security.

In this regard, mediation needs to be relevant not only to classic inter-State/intra-State wars, but also to these lower-level threats to security. It also needs to be relevant not only in "post-conflict" societies, but also in vulnerable, fragile or failed States, including "democratizing" regimes. This new security agenda calls for wider coordination and cooperation in mediation efforts among Governments, the United Nations, regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, development agencies and local communities.

The United Nations has significantly increased its mediation capacity over the past decade, and it continues to be the principal actor in the field of mediation. However, there is less consensus within the Security Council regarding how to act in dealing with the increasing number of complex cases. There is also normative change, especially with regard to justice, accountability and the responsibility to protect, which to a certain extent complicate and limit the possibilities for United

Nations-led mediation and reconciliation efforts. This has opened up space for other actors.

Regional and subregional organizations and civil society actors are playing a greater role in conflict management and mediation in their own neighbourhoods. Regional actors attuned to local sensitivities and cultural traditions are better positioned to support, sustain and reinforce negotiation processes, including those in which external actors are involved. In other words, they are catalysts and legitimizers of action in their neighbourhoods.

However, they still lack sufficient assets or capabilities to deal with serious conflicts on their own, so they continue to reach out to others, including the United Nations. In this regard, track I and track II actors have their respective comparative advantages, and they should complement each other in their efforts. This would also contribute to the effective use of limited resources.

With the proliferation of actors engaged in mediation, coordination has assumed greater importance, and the key word for successful coordination is "respect". Coordination is essential for ensuring effectiveness and avoiding situations in which the various actors are played against one another. Therefore, although it is difficult, it would be ideal to have a lead mediator and to encourage all the relevant sides to adhere to the singularity of the process.

It is important to continue the work to enhance capacity in the field of mediation. There is still not enough such capacity, particularly at the level of regional actors, and the quality of mediation activities has a direct impact on the ability of peace to prevail. In this regard, mediators need to be adept, culturally sensitive, gender-attuned, relationship-oriented and politically imaginative, as opposed to process-driven. They need to have a vision and a repertoire of ideas and to strongly believe that success is within reach. These qualities should be fostered in the training of future mediators.

On the other hand, internal factors such as the willingness of the parties are certainly more important for success than outside factors. However, even when the contesting parties are willing to resolve their conflict, the international community must be active in mediation, facilitation and conflict resolution. In this regard, the mediator's role and goals should be carefully determined, while due significance should be attached to the service of justice, along with peace and reconciliation.

It should also be borne in mind that mediation does not end with the signing of peace agreements. What is needed is not just a peace in which there is no fighting. Building a quality peace which would address the root causes of the conflict and helping to implement such agreements should be the ultimate aims in order to avoid a recurrence of violence. Cooperation, rather than competition, among the various actors engaged in mediation is essential in achieving this ultimate aim.

6. High-level session of the Conference

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, touched upon the drastic changes that had occurred in the global environment over the past two decades and stressed that Turkey had been directly or indirectly affected by all these changes owing to its geostrategic location. Therefore, the country felt compelled to undertake more responsibility towards the prevention and peaceful resolution of conflicts in its region and beyond. He stated that the Mediation for

Peace initiative launched by Turkey and Finland had been a concrete reflection of this understanding. He underlined the importance of maintaining the momentum achieved through this initiative and thanked the President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly for designating mediation as one of the priorities of the session. Minister Davutoğlu then shared his experiences with regard to mediation and facilitation and elaborated on the psychological, intellectual, ethical and methodological dimensions of mediation.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, H.E. Erkki Tuomioja, commended the Conference for bringing together a broad and experienced group of representatives from civil society, the United Nations, regional organizations and Governments with a view to providing a forum for interactive discussions and helping to map out future work in the field of mediation. Furthermore, he emphasized the role of mediation as a significant tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and confidence-building. He stressed the importance of having early warning information on emerging conflicts and the ability to use it for concrete preventive action. He also elaborated on the role of civil society in preventive mediation, and the importance of cooperation and coordination among the various actors involved in mediation. Minister Tuomioja also expressed Finland's commitment to maintaining the momentum within the framework of the Mediation for Peace initiative, including by organizing workshops and seminars.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Brazil, H.E. Antonio Patriota, praised the Conference and the Mediation for Peace initiative under which it was held as a very useful tool for enhancing the global commitment to mediation. He explained the role of prevention and mediation in Brazilian foreign policy as well as the responsibilities that Brazil had undertaken in this field worldwide, with a particular focus on Latin America. He underlined the interdependence among peace, security and development and highlighted the need to take a deeper look at the root causes of conflicts and deal with development issues. He also stressed the importance of sustaining the efforts aimed at disarmament and proliferation, since the most serious threats to peace came from heavily armed societies. Emphasizing that prevention was the best way to deal with tensions and conflicts, Minister Patriota also reiterated Brazil's strong support for the work of the Group of Friends of Mediation.

The President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, stressed the importance of mediation in today's complex world. In this regard, he indicated that as President of the General Assembly, he had identified mediation and the peaceful settlement of disputes as one of his four priority areas. He expressed satisfaction with the momentum created by the first-ever General Assembly resolution on mediation, adopted on 22 June 2011. He touched upon the developments that had occurred at the United Nations since the adoption of this landmark resolution and expressed his intention to build on that momentum and carry it forward. In this regard, he informed the participants of the informal high-level meeting of the General Assembly that he would host on 23 May 2012 in New York, with a focus on the role of Member States in mediation. He also expressed his readiness to follow up on the conclusions of the Istanbul Conference on Mediation, particularly in the light of the preparations for the informal high-level meeting of the Assembly on 23 May.

Attachment

Istanbul Conference on Mediation

Enhancing Peace through Mediation: New Actors, Fresh Approaches, Bold Initiatives

Istanbul, 24 and 25 February 2012

24 February, Friday

9.00-9.45	Registration
9.45-11.15	***First session***
	"Increasing relevance of non-governmental actors in conflict resolution"
	What are the unique strengths and comparative advantages of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in mediation processes? What role do civil society organizations perform in nurturing peace processes? In which conflict situations have such groups or individuals made the greatest contribution and why? What are the disadvantages of the proliferation of mediators (competition, forum-shopping, incoherent messaging, etc.), and how can they be mitigated? How will the increasingly diverse cast of (non-State) mediators impact the traditional (State-sponsored) mediation efforts? Are NGOs better equipped to grapple with the pressure for quick success and ensuring local ownership in their mediation efforts? What is the best way to meet the challenges of maintaining impartiality and getting the necessary funding for the NGOs involved in mediation?
	Moderator: Necla Tschirgi, Professor of Practice, Human Security and Peacebuilding, Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies, University of San Diego, United States of America
	Speakers
	– Fabienne Hara, Vice-President, International Crisis Group, New York, United States of America
	– Dr. Katia Papagianni, Director for Policy and Mediation Support, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Geneva, Switzerland
	– Tuija Talvitie, Executive Director for Crisis Management Initiative, Helsinki, Finland
11.15-11.45	Coffee break
11.45-12.15	***Presentation*** by H.E. Ertuğrul Apakan, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, and H.E. Jarmo Viinanen, Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations, on the activities of the Group of Friends of Mediation in New York
12.15-13.45	Lunch break

13.45-15.15 ***Second session***

"Evolving role of the United Nations in mediation"

Has the United Nations been successful in promoting and supporting the peaceful resolution of disputes? To which direction is the role of the United Nations evolving in mediation? What can be done to strengthen the ability of the United Nations in mediating conflicts and heading off potential crises before they erupt? Is there any specific kind of conflict (armed, ethnic, intercommunal, etc.) with respect to which the United Nations is better equipped to take on a mediation role? Is there room for improvement for the United Nations to enhance its relationship with NGOs? What is the overall evaluation of the activities conducted by the Mediation Support Unit in the Department of Political Affairs before, during and after conflict? Is there a need to broaden the scope and extent of United Nations outreach through new mechanisms such as the United Nations regional offices?

Moderator: H.E. Levent Bilman, Director, Policy and Mediation Division, United Nations Department of Political Affairs

Speakers

- Professor Radha Kumar, New Delhi Foundation, New Delhi, India
- Professor Edward C. Luck, Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect, New York, United States of America
- Youssef Mahmoud, Senior Adviser, International Peace Institute, New York, United States of America

15.15-15.45 Coffee break

15.45-17.15 ***Third session***

"Addressing the coordination and capacity-building challenges"

What can be done to maximize synergies and coherence among the sometimes disparate actors (States, the United Nations, other regional organizations, NGOs, individuals) involved in prevention and mediation? Where has coherence suffered and where has it prospered? How can the spirit of cooperation, sharing of information and coherence in messaging be encouraged and enhanced between the various actors involved in mediation? Which types of partnership arrangements (lead role, joint mediation or co-mediation) have proved most effective, and in which contexts? On what basis can it be determined which mediator/mediation team would be most appropriate and effective in each case? How can more funding be attracted to mediation activities? Which aspects of capacity-building issues (such as training, financing, knowledge-sharing, joint assessment, rosters of experts) should receive the highest priority at this point? Should the United Nations play a leading role in building capacity and ensuring coordination, and how? Which other international organizations and entities should be involved in such efforts?

Moderator: Professor Fuat Keyman, Director of the Istanbul Policy Centre and Professor of International Relations at Sabancı University, Istanbul, Turkey

Speakers

- Jan Egeland, Europe Director and Deputy Executive Director, Human Rights Watch, Oslo, Norway
- Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, Durban, South Africa
- Michael S. Lund, Senior Fellow, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., United States of America

17.15-17.45 Coffee break

17.45-19.15 ***Fourth session***

"Alternative approaches to mediation"

What do "mainstream" and "alternative" mean within the realm of mediation? How did alternative approaches emerge in the area of mediation? Who are the main actors and promoters of alternative approaches in mediation? To what extent have alternative mediation approaches been effective and why? Do alternative approaches in mediation bridge the gap between theory and practice? What are the limits of being alternative to the mainstream mediation approaches? What is the role of "insider mediators", who come from within the conflict region and often play key roles by connecting the parties in collaboration with other insiders? How are cultural differences relevant to the area of mediation? What does "non-Western mediation" mean? Is there a clear-cut difference between the mediation approaches of Western and non-Western actors? Is there an Asian or Islamic way of mediation? To what extent could or should the United Nations take into account the alternative approaches in mediation while preparing its guidance for more effective mediation?

Moderator: Professor Bülent Aras, Chairman of the Centre for Strategic Research, MFA, Ankara, Turkey

- Dr. Morgan Brigg, School of Political Science and International Studies, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
- Professor Alma Abdul-Hadi Jadallah, President and Managing Director, Kommon Denominator, Virginia, United States of America
- Dr. Norbert Ropers, Program Director, Berghof Foundation, Bangkok, Thailand

20.00-22.00 Dinner/venue: The Marmara Hotel

25 February, Saturday

9.30-11.00	Speeches by • H.E. Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Turkey • H.E. Erkki Tuomioja, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Finland • H.E. Antonio Patriota, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Brazil • H.E. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, President of the sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly
11.00-11.30	Coffee break
11.30-13.00	***Final session*** ***"Ideas for the future"*** *What key insights emerged from the discussions that could inform future choices about tools, capacities, partnerships and strategies for mediation? What will be the impact of the increasing profile of NGOs in international mediation efforts on traditional mediation activities? Has the field of international mediation become too crowded to the extent that the competition among various actors could undermine the overall work? How might recent trends towards greater support for prevention and mediation be sustained in the years ahead? In view of the rapidly changing nature of conflicts in the world, what will be required of the United Nations in performing its mediation role? Does the idea of setting up regional offices for mediation strengthen the ability of the United Nations to coordinate and build capacity?* Moderator: H.E. Şafak Göktürk, Director-General for Policy Planning, MFA, Ankara, Turkey – Professor William Zartman, Professor Emeritus, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D.C., United States of America – Professor Fen Hampson, Chancellor's Professor and Director, Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada – Professor Peter Wallensteen, Dag Hammarskjöld Professor of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, Sweden
13.00-14.30	Lunch
15.00-18.00	***Simulation*** on mediation to be conducted by Sabancı University/venue: The Marmara Hotel

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Security Council

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General Assembly
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Agenda item 31
Report of the Peacebuilding Commission

Security Council
Sixty-seventh year

Letter dated 4 May 2012 from the Chairperson of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

In my capacity as Chair of the Burundi configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, I have the honour to share with you the main outcomes of a mission that I recently undertook to Burundi, from 18 to 25 April 2012.

My visit was part of the regular engagement of the Peacebuilding Commission with Burundi and was intended as a follow-up to the meeting of the Commission with the second Vice-President of Burundi on 12 April 2012, in New York focused on the second poverty reduction strategy paper and the related resource mobilization efforts. On my way to Bujumbura, I paid a brief visit to European Union headquarters in Brussels to meet Ambassador Koen Vervaeke, European Union Director for the Horn of Africa, East and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean and Senior Coordinator of the European Union for the Great Lakes Region.

The visit was also undertaken partly pursuant to Security Council resolution 2027 (2011) of 20 December 2011, in which the Council encouraged the Government of Burundi, the Peacebuilding Commission and its national and international partners to honour their commitments made under the outcome document of the fifth review of the implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi and to review these commitments once the second poverty reduction strategy paper had been finalized, in order to determine how the Commission could best contribute to Burundi's peacebuilding priorities.

In the course of my stay in Burundi, I met with several interlocutors, including at the highest levels of Government, as well as other key stakeholders in the country.

My overall impression is that the situation in the country has further stabilized and progressed since my last visit, in the fourth quarter of 2011. This is reflected in the substantial improvement in the relationship between the ruling political party and the opposition not represented in parliament. The harsh and sometimes provocative language which I heard from both sides in the past has disappeared or at

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least has considerably subsided. It seems that the Government and the Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) as the majority party have come to the conclusion that it would be better to give political space to the opposition in the lead-up to the next elections in 2015.

The recent change in the leadership of CNDD-FDD (its party leaders and wings of women and youth) further highlights a positive evolution in the political situation. At the same time, the opposition, while still occasionally very critical of the Government, has moderated its behaviour and participated, for instance, in a recent seminar on the law on opposition. One major indicative trend in the context of the prevailing "détente", as noted by the President of the independent national commission on human rights, is a decrease in human rights violations and assassinations with a likely political motivation over the last months, although such violent deaths still take place.

The modest progress in the political situation could, however, be jeopardized by economic conditions. With the considerable price increases in gasoline and basic food commodities such as rice and beans, the focus of public agitation has shifted towards the socioeconomic situation. In Bujumbura, everybody mentioned *la vie chère* (the high cost of living) which has become the common slogan for the problems caused by the rise of food and commodity prices. Civil society reacted with protests and a "stay-at-home" rally in March. In turn, the Government accused civil society organizations of abusing their respective roles and acting as a political opposition movement. While the controversy has so far been limited to mutual recriminations which are at times acrimonious but not violent, several interlocutors told me that the worsening socioeconomic situation has a clear potential to create unrest and is seen as potentially dangerous.

There is also some concern regarding the Commission nationale des terres et autres biens (the National Land Commission) whose policy some commentators perceive as one-sided, since its decisions to allocate land seem to favour the rights of returnees over those of existing landholders. Since the land issue is one of the most delicate in a densely populated Burundi heavily dependent on agriculture, a fair and equitable distribution of land is important also from a peacebuilding perspective.

On a more positive note, the fiscal situation has improved quite substantially owing to the increased efficiency of the Office burundais des recettes (the revenue office). With assistance mainly from the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the revenue office has been re-formed so as to constitute an independent and more effective and efficient institution. Fiscal loopholes have been dealt with and corruption has been reduced. The energetic behaviour of the revenue office has provoked counter-reactions across the political spectrum and from parts of civil society, which feel that the agency is acting too aggressively. Still, the re-formed revenue office exemplifies a positive development within the institutional architecture of Burundi and its independence and effectiveness should be preserved.

Despite an increasingly difficult socioeconomic situation which is likely to worsen, I encouraged the Government to sustain the progress in the areas of political openness, good governance and human rights and the rule of law. In that context, I mentioned, among other matters, the trial of the person or persons responsible for the murder of Ernest Manirumva, whose apparent lack of progress had the potential

to hurt the image of Burundi. I underlined that the Peacebuilding Commission and its Chair remain committed to assisting and supporting Burundi. Advancements in the political and institutional fields would greatly help my efforts to generate goodwill on the international level which would be beneficial in the run-up to the meeting on the second poverty reduction strategy paper which Burundi hopes to convene in the fourth quarter of 2012.

The Government of Burundi plans to hold an international partners meeting to generate support for the second poverty reduction strategy paper. The conference would serve as a means for the Government to generate financial resources for the implementation of the paper whose overall cost Burundi estimates at 2.5 billion United States dollars. October 2012 has been mentioned as a possible date. The Government of Burundi has asked Switzerland to host the meeting. My Government is reviewing the request and we will be able to provide an answer in due time.

Overall, the reaction of the international community in Bujumbura to the planned event, though positive, is guarded concerning its financial impact. The echoes I have received, suggest that it would be unrealistic to aim at the generation of resources in the amount sought by Burundi. Most traditional donors assured me that they would continue to support Burundi within existing financial commitments. While some non-traditional donors signalled their interest in participating at the meeting and their openness to consider financing on a project basis, a gap still seems to exist between the expectations of the Government of Burundi and those of its international partners. I have informed the second Vice-President and the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance of the budgetary difficulties that major donors are currently facing and warned Burundian interlocutors that it may be difficult to generate additional funding. I also urged them to define priorities, both substantive and time-related. It would be important to identify the most pressing and important needs — those that have to be addressed first. Further, Burundi has to step up the pace of both the conceptual and the organizational preparations for the meeting.

A number of things need to be done within the next weeks:

(a) Burundi and the international community should agree on the objectives, the setting and the format of the meeting. It may be helpful to establish scenarios on possible outcomes of the meeting and follow-up;

(b) An operational "task force" should be set up in Bujumbura comprising the major national and international actors. A timeline with a to-do list needs to be established and a division of labour defined. Burundi should have the leading role in this exercise, but the international community, especially the organizations of the United Nations system, should closely assist;

(c) Burundi, with the help of the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, should define its most important priorities, bearing in mind that constraints in the international donor environment are tight;

(d) The Peacebuilding Commission, not only through its Chair, but also through all its members, should intensify the advocacy for Burundi, particularly among non-traditional donors.

The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to work with the Government of Burundi on the partners conference as well as on other relevant peacebuilding issues.

I remain at your disposal with respect to providing such further information and clarifications as may be required by the members of the Security Council. The Peacebuilding Commission will continue to monitor the situation and keep the Council informed on developments relating to the peacebuilding priorities agreed between the Government of Burundi and the Commission.

(*Signed*) Paul R. **Seger**
Chair
Peacebuilding Commission — Burundi configuration